

Import Duties Involved

# Probe Urged on Parcel Foul-Up

By VANCE TRIMBLE  
Scripps-Howard Staff Writer

A mysterious foul-up has blocked delivery of \$1 million worth of food and clothing Americans mailed to relatives and friends in the Soviet Union.

Russia already has returned "several thousand" packages sent via General Parcel and Travel Co. of New York. Several hundred more came back to the New York post office over the week-end.

A controversy over prepayment of heavy import duties to the Russians is involved.

The parcels are from 11 American cities, including New York, Cleveland, San Francisco, Hartford, Conn., and Newark and Irvington, N. J.

## DEMANDS PROBE

Sen. Thomas Dodd (D., Conn.) disclosed the situation in a sharply worded Senate speech last Friday. He demanded a Justice Department investigation.

Thousands of Americans, Sen. Dodd charged, are victims of "either fraud or embezzlement by the agency legally designated by the Soviet government as the sole vehicle for shipment of parcels to citizens of the USSR."

Incorporated under American laws five years ago, General Parcel is operated by Leonid Tankel, 54, a naturalized American. He was born in Russia and came to the U. S. in 1940.

General Parcel, Sen. Dodd asserted, was "created" by Intourist, the official Soviet government travel agency, to handle gift parcels from America.

Branch managers of General Parcel became suspicious several months ago, Sen. Dodd said, when they discovered the packages they were sending had not been delivered behind the Iron curtain.

which the senders had paid \$100,000 in postage and duty.

The branch managers—all Americans—met in New York to demand an explanation from Mr. Tankel.

"At this meeting," Sen. Dodd said, "it was established that Intourist had returned all parcels because General Parcel had not paid the duties, even tho these prepaid duties had been remitted."

"What happened to the prepaid duties could not be established. Mr. Tankel offered no explanation. About the only thing certain is that the money disappeared along the line either in the offices of General Parcel or in the American offices of Intourist."

"The money, it appears, is just gone with the wind."

## COMPLICATED

Asked for comment today, Mr. Tankel said the foul-up "is too complicated to explain." He confirmed that "several thousand" parcels are stacked up in his New York basement.

Mr. Tankel said he went to Moscow in August "to straighten this out." Russian authorities agreed to advance him about \$100,000 in credit to cover necessary duties so the packages can be re-mailed, he said.

"Nobody will lose anything," Mr. Tankel said. "I never took a dollar in my life—and I won't start now."

The packages will be re-mailed within "four or five weeks," Mr. Tankel said.

His Hartford, Conn. agent, Anthony Ustjanauskis, said some of the packages have been in transit as long as six months and are "ruined or badly damaged." He said Tankel's claim Intourist has authorized the re-mailing is untrue.

CPYRGHT

CPYRGHT